DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 253 355 RC 015 049

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TITLE	The Tale of the Possum.
INSTITUTION	Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, Philadelphia.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (ED), Washington, DC. Indian Education Programs.
PUB DATE	84
GRANT	G008100625
NOTE	12p.; For related documents, see RC 015 047-053.
AVAILABLE FROM	Research and Curriculum Development, Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, Tribal Office Building, Rt. 7 Box 21, Philadelphia, MS 39350 ($2.75).
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom Use - Materials (For Learner) (051)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*American Indian Education; *American Indian Literature; *Animals; Cultural Influences; Early Childhood Education; Folk Culture; *Legends; Mythology; Story Reading; *Supplementary Reading Materials; *Values
IDENTIFIERS	*Mississippi Band of Choctaw (Tribe)

ABSTRACT

The story is about how Possum wanted a beautiful tail like Raccoon. Raccoon jokingly tells Possum how he got his pretty black stripes by wrapping his tail with hickory bark and singing it in hot ashes. As a result of Possum doing as Raccoon told him, oppossums today have no hair on their tails, travel at night because of embarrassment, and "play possum." This booklet is supplemental reading material for the "Choctaw Culture Early Education Activities" guide. The guide suggests activities pertaining to this story. (ERB)

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Rec'd 11/26/89

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The Tale of the 'Possum

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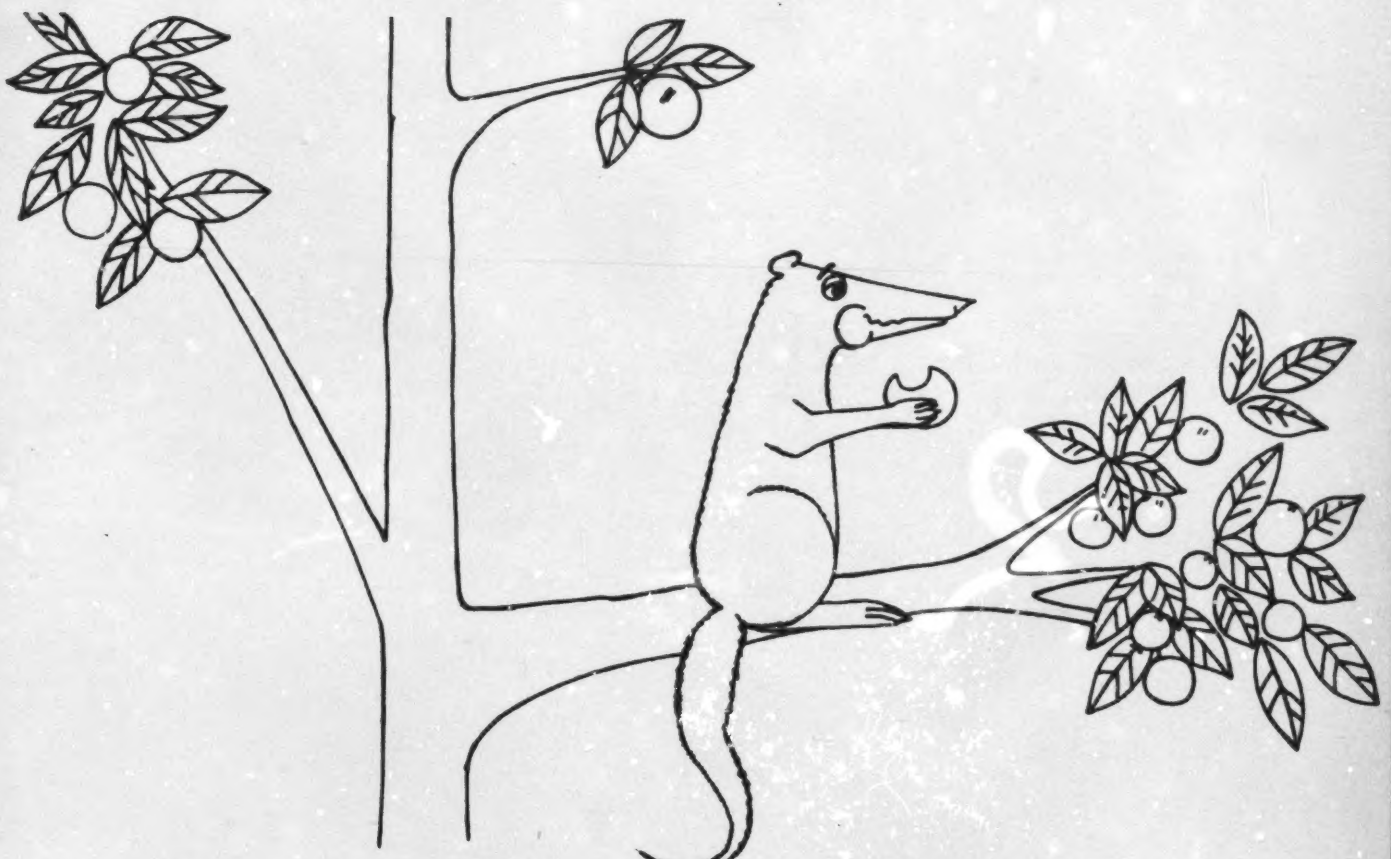
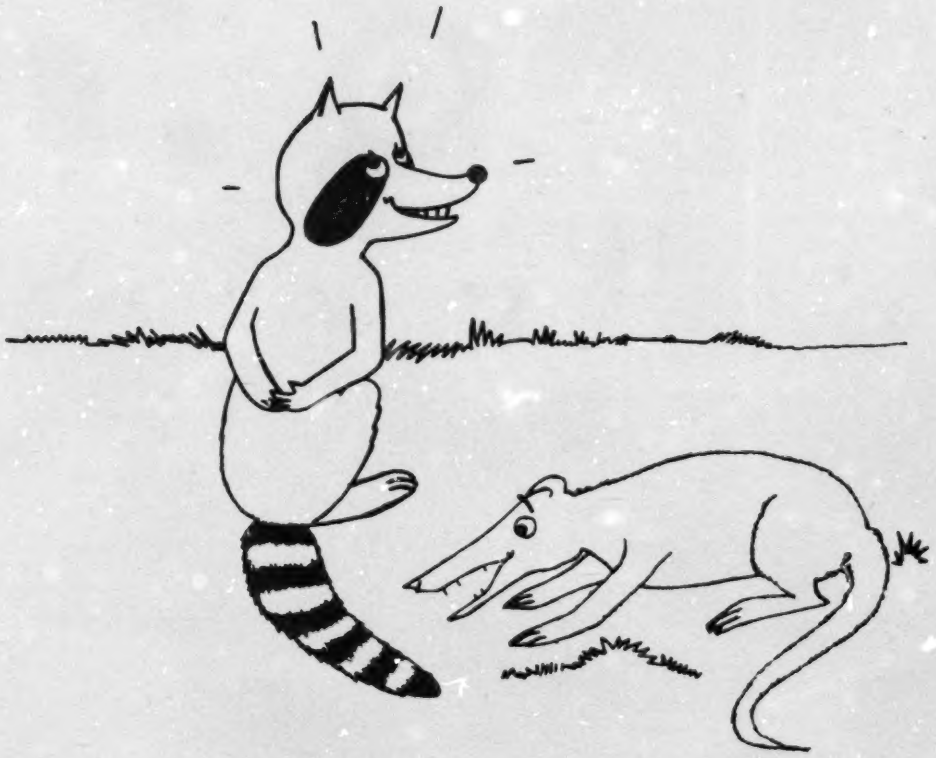


One day 'Possum was sitting in a persimmon tree. The persimmons were ripe and ready to eat. 'Possum kept eating and eating.

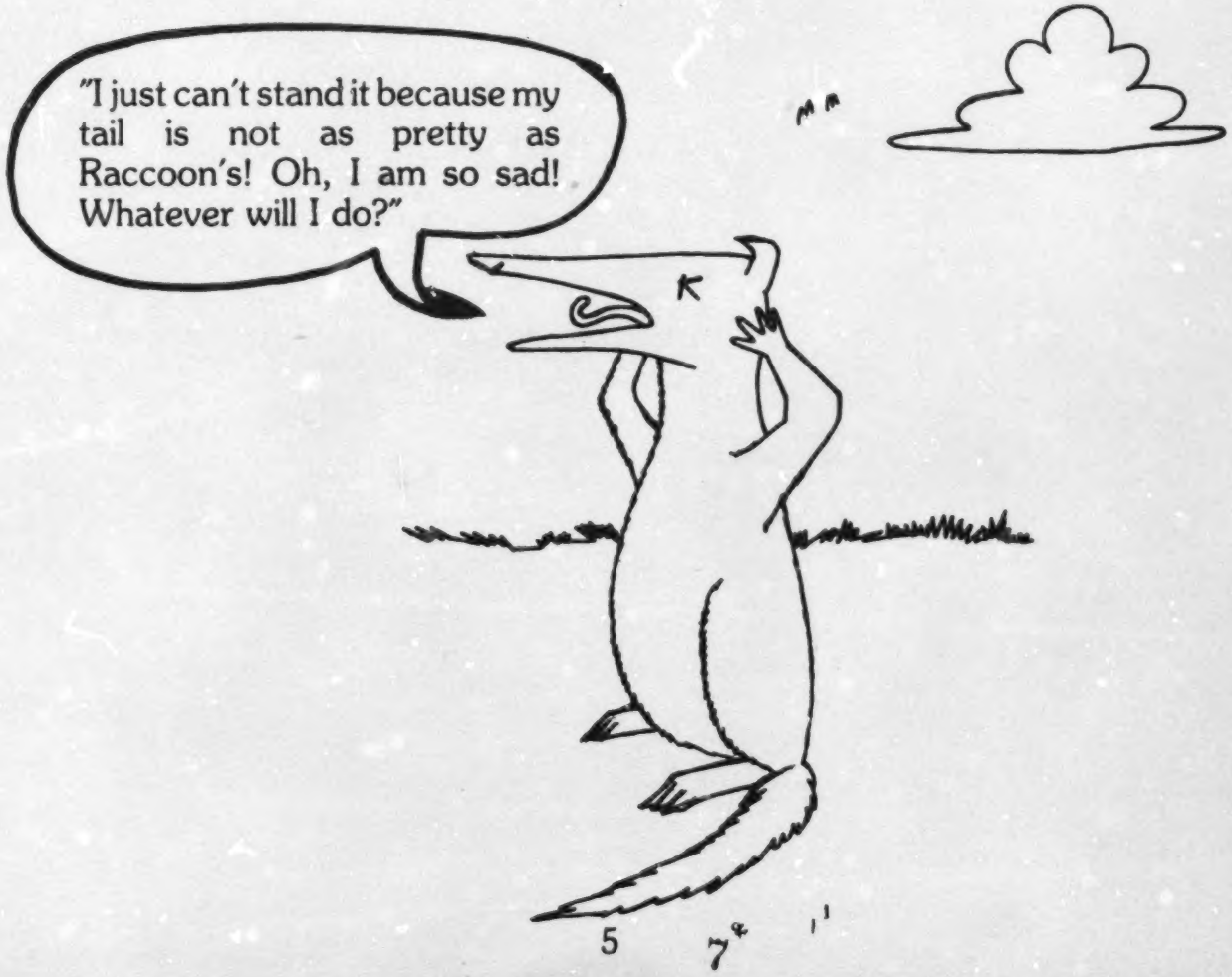
Pretty soon, Raccoon came along. 'Possum saw its beautiful tail. It had pretty black stripes.



'Possum could hardly take his eyes off Raccoon's beautiful tail. He said, "Šawi, How did you get your beautiful tail?" Raccoon smiled and said, "Oh, Šokatta, It was easy! I just took some hickory bark and wrapped it around my tail. Then I singed it in hot ashes to make my stripes."

Raccoon said, "See you later!", and he went on his way. 'Possum kept thinking about Raccoon's beautiful tail.

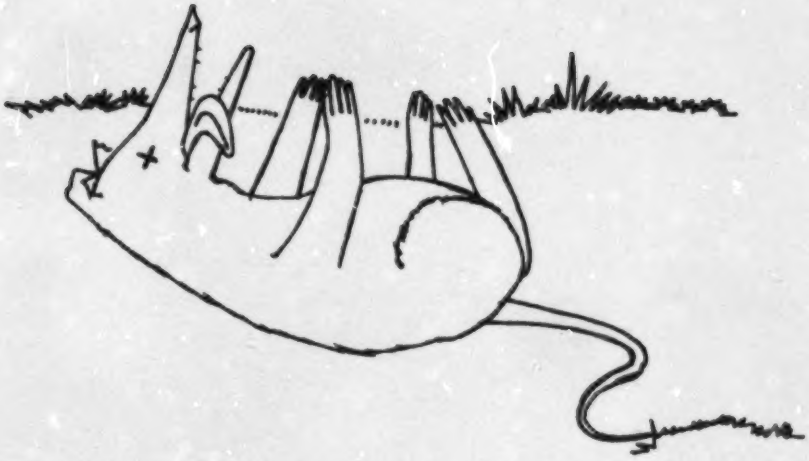
'Possum finally screamed.



Finally, 'Possum decided he just had to fix his tail like Raccoon's. So he built a hot fire. Then he got some hickory bark and wrapped his tail. He got ready to stick his tail into the fire so he could singe it and have stripes just like the raccoon.

But when he stuck his tail into the fire, it was so hot, it burned all the hair off. He hollered and hollered. "Oh! My tail! It's even uglier now than it was before! Oh, no! Oh, no! Oh, no!!!"

So ever since then, the 'possum has had no hair on his tail. He is still so embarrassed that he only travels at night.



Even today, if you surprise a 'possum, he will fall down and roll over and pretend to be dead. But you will know he's really not. . .
He's just "playing 'possum."

THE TALE OF THE POSSUM

A Traditional Choctaw Story

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This project is made possible by a grant from the Department of Education Office Indian Program; Grant Number-G008100625.

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Special thanks to: Irma Boulley and Benny Mitch

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